



March 13, 1998

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the American Cancer Society, I want to commend you for your leadership in introducing legislation to improve the quality of our nation's health care system. As the largest voluntary health organizations dedicated to improving cancer care, we appreciate your efforts to ensure patients continue to receive high quality, appropriate medical care.

As you know, our health care system is shifting rapidly from a traditional fee-for-service system to one where market-based alternatives of the predominant choice for employers, consumers and other purchasers of health care. This transition to what is commonly referred to as "managed care" presents both opportunities and concerns for persons with serious illnesses such as cancer. At its best, managed care offers coordinated care for prevention, early detection, and treatment of cancer, as well as health promotion programs. At its worst, this system, which is intended to provide greater access to care for those who cannot afford coverage, has a tendency to be more concerned with controlling costs than with protecting the health and welfare of patients.

Two years ago, the American Cancer Society took a close look at the implications of managed care on patient care and developed a comprehensive set of principles designed to provide guidance to policymakers on the conditions and services needed to improve the quality of patient care. These conditions, which we are pleased to note have also been included in your bill, are: 1) greater access to specialists, especially for patients with life threatening or disabling illnesses; 2) access to clinical trials; 3) timely grievance procedures; and 4) disclosure of plan policies and services. We believe these provisions are essential components of any good health plan and we hope, under your leadership, Congress will move quickly to enact them into law.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to these issues, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to enact meaningful health care reforms this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Linda Hay Crawford".

Linda Hay Crawford
National Vice President